

IRELAND'S RIGHT

TO

SELF DETERMINATION

By
REV. DR. J. A. H. IRWIN
Minister, Presbyterian Church
Killead, Ireland.

IDLE THOUGHTS

ON IRELAND

By
JEROME K. JEROME

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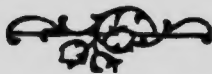
Rev. J. A. H. Irwin, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., Minister of the Congregation of Killead, a large parish in the County of Antrim near Belfast, Ireland, is associated with the General Assembly of the Irish Presbyterian Church.

He is manager of four National Schools, and has succeeded in building recently what is admitted to be the finest rural National school in Ireland.

He is a member of most of the leading committees of the Irish Presbyterian Church (including the Committee in correspondence with the British Government), and takes an active part in their work. He is also Synodical Convener of the Sustenance Fund of the Irish Presbyterian Church, the mainstay and support of three-fourths of its ministers. He is also a Director of the Widow's Fund of the same Church, providing for the widows and orphans of Ministers.

In his capacity as member of the Presbyterian Health Insurance Society, which administers the Health Insurance benefits to the majority of Presbyterians insured throughout Ireland, Dr. Irwin has been in close touch with vital social problems in Ireland. He is also Vice-President of the County Antrim Insurance Committee, which is combatting tuberculosis throughout the County, and holds an executive position also in the Women's Health Association of Antrim.

In addition to his ministerial duties Dr. Irwin owns and operates a large farm, and is a member of the Ulster Farmers' Union. He is a man of many parts, for in addition to his executive and administrative duties he has several distinctions as a scholar. He obtained the Ph.D. degree of the National University—a distinction held by only one other individual in the world. He took first place in the M.A. degree and secured the B.D. degree from the Irish Presbyterian Faculty.



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ADDRESS:

IRELAND'S RIGHT — to — SELF-DETERMINATION

BY

REV. DR. J. A. H. IRWIN,

Minister, Presbyterian Church, Killead, Ireland.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen:—

I wish to thank you most heartily for the very cordial reception you have given me here this evening and for this magnificent audience which is gathered together to hear something about Ireland. It is certainly a great pleasure for me to come to this magnificent city to speak on behalf of my own country to citizens of this part of the British Empire.

There was a philosopher who was very old and, consequently, very wise, and he said there were three great wonders in the world for him. First, he wondered why boys were so foolish as to throw stones to bring down apples, because, he said, with patience the apples would fall off themselves; the second wonder to him was, why people were so foolish as to fall out and fight because if they only waited their enemies would all die; and the third wonder to him was, why young men were so foolish as to run after girls, because if they only had patience the girls would run after them.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, there may be a fourth wonder; you may wonder why any one is here from across the Atlantic to speak to you of the problems, difficulties and perplexities of Ireland. You have plenty problems, difficulties and perplexities of your own; but I think there are two or three very important and cogent reasons which will show you that we are justified in coming here to speak to you in regard to our native land.

In the first place, remember that for centuries the very cream of our life blood has flowed across the Atlantic—I understand there are over a million men and women in this great Dominion of Irish birth and blood, and I am certain that each of these has done his or her part and played their fair share in building up the prosperity of this great Dominion of yours.

I remember, as a student in the city of Londonderry on Friday afternoons I would go down to the quay and watch the emigrants setting sail for Canada and the United States. There were the young men and

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the young women; the very flower of our race, with life and hope in their eyes, the bloom of youth on their cheeks; some laughing, some crying, some singing to keep their courage up; all sons and daughters whom a loving mother tended—there on the quay. Also there were their fathers and mothers; the fathers—men not much given to emotion—with tears streaming down their cheeks; the mothers wringing their hands in anguish, knowing that for the most part they would never see their children again. I tell you that was a sight sufficient to bring tears to any man's eyes, and I knew that it was false economic conditions in my land that made it necessary for those young men and young women to cross the ocean for the privilege of earning their daily bread. And there I made a vow that, if I lived, I would do a man's part to make it unnecessary for any young people to leave their father's home and their native land to cross the ocean in order to earn their daily bread.

If those sons and daughters were by our side to-day in Ireland we would have a population of some fifteen or twenty million souls, and if we had that population we would need to stand at no man's door to ask for our liberty. If these, our sons and daughters, were by our side we need not speak ashamedly to any nation on the face of God's earth, and if we cannot look to our own sons and daughters, our own flesh and blood in our time of need, where on God's fair earth can we look?

But there is another reason why we speak to you. You are part of the great British Empire, one of the great British Dominions, and whatever honor and glory comes to it, you have your fair share, and whatever blame or shame comes to it, you must also bear your portion of it.

The whole question of Ireland is not merely a question for Ireland and England; it is a question for all the British Dominions, aye, it is a question for the whole world. What did your sons and fathers and brothers fight for? Was it not for liberty, for democracy, for freedom of nations, great and small? And you have applied some of these principles to the nations of the Central Empire, to Poland, to Jugoslavia, to Czecho-Slovakia, to Belgium, and the world is asking, "Why, in the name of common sense do you not apply the same principles to Ireland?" Can you believe that before the war there were twenty men in this Dominion who ever heard the name of Czecho-Slovakia or Jugoslavia? I question if any man could even point out the boundaries of those countries on the map. No man has any trouble in pointing out the boundaries of Ireland.

Ireland's claim is as good and better than that of most of those nations and it is older, and it is right and just that you should see justice applied all around; not to only one part, only one people, but to all the world, and then the world will know that you are honest and sincere in your claims and professions and it will know that you have won some of the things for which you fought and died.

But, there is another reason why I, especially, should appear before you tonight. Lord Beaverbrook—perhaps better known to you by the

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name of Max Aiken—in the House of Lords some time ago said he would change the venue of this question from Great Britain and Ireland to America, and he would send over some Protestant Ministers to the United States and Canada who would use the Protestant Churches to crush all sympathy for Ireland. We know that a number of worthy gentlemen came over from Ulster to tell you that this was a religious question.

Now, these gentlemen were perfectly justified in coming over here, so long as they represented it to be a political and economic question, but I say that they had no right to represent it to you, or to anybody, as being what it is not.

I came to the United States with my wife for the benefit of my health and I was not here a day until I was faced with misrepresentations and misconstructions and misapprehensions in regard to this question and it was borne in upon me that it was my duty as a Christian Minister, so long as I remained here and my health allowed me, to do all I could to dispel some of those misrepresentations so that the people of the United States and Canada might be able to understand this question and judge it on its merits.

I do not pretend or claim—it would be impertinent of me to do so—I do not pretend or claim to represent the Irish Presbyterian Church, or any Protestant Church, but I am here as a Christian Minister, on my own responsibility, and I am prepared to discuss this question on any platform, here or anywhere else, with any living man.

Now I know that these worthy gentlemen had a perfectly peaceful time across this continent, behind closed doors.

That reminds me of a story: There was a lady who lost her husband and she ascribed to him all of the virtues and had a fine monument erected over his grave, on which she had inscribed the words "Rest in Peace." After she had given the order for the inscription stories were told and she came to the conclusion that he was not all that he might have been. She was indignant and wished to change the inscription on the monument but it was too late as it was already completed. However, she decided to rectify matters as best she could, and under the final inscription of "Rest in Peace" she had the sculptor add the words "till I come."

I know that as far as the Protestants were concerned these reverend gentlemen had a perfectly peaceful time, until I have come; which accounts for the great interest some of my Christian brethren have taken in me.

I want to look at this question from the point of view of a Christian Minister. I am not a politician—the ways of politicians to me are very strange—but as an ordinary Presbyterian Minister—as black as they make them—I say that no Minister worthy of the name can look at Ireland to-day with any degree of complacency or self-satisfaction; no Christian Minister worthy of the name looking at Ireland to-day,

seeing over the whole country two or three hundred thousand soldiers, armed to the teeth, coercing a high-strung people, not knowing from day to day when the spark will ignite, the effect of which no man can tell; no Christian Minister can look with satisfaction, and no minister in any State to-day but ought to feel it his bounden duty to do everything he can to see that this question is settled once and for all, and settled in a way to bring peace and prosperity to Ireland and to England, to the British Dominions and to the whole world. No question is settled that is not settled right, and the only way a question can be settled in a civilized country is by the will of the majority of the people.

Before I address myself to the religious aspect of the question I want to give you two or three reasons why so many common-sense practical men are dissatisfied with the present relationship. It is often said: "Why are you not content to remain part of the British Empire and to enjoy the rights of British citizenship and settle down and have common-sense?" Now, I am not going to deal with the historical argument, it is too long and it is practically admitted by all parties who know anything about it; it is admitted by British Statesmen that there is no real union between Great Britain and Ireland. Lloyd George discussing this question the other night in the House of Commons said that between Scotland and England there was union; between Wales and England there was union, but between Ireland and England there was only the union of the grappling hook. It is admitted that the union between Great Britain and Ireland has neither legal nor moral force.

Now, in Ireland, we are not for Revolution, although I don't deny the right of revolution if circumstances demand it, but we are simply asking for the justice that has been ours for generations and for centuries; the same justice that Belgium asked for and received; the same justice that Poland asked for and received; that is all that Ireland is asking to-day.

I will not dwell on the sentimental aspect of the question. You all know the great part that sentiment plays in any great cause, but I am not going to dwell on that; I prefer to dwell on two or three practical reasons why practical, common-sense business men, not affected by sentiment but by common-sense, why these men are dissatisfied with the present relationship.

There are two or three factors necessary for progress and prosperity and happiness of any people in any country: first, the right to develop their own industries natural to their soil; second, reasonable means of transit for the transportation of their products; third, a national, responsible, sound system of finance.

Now take these three factors. Take our Industries; there never has been a single industry of any consequence in Ireland, if it competed with anything in England, but was killed by parliament or by the hidden hand of finance. Take our coal. We have coal in Ireland, but if you want to develop it and form a company a number of Britishers will buy the controlling interest and appoint a manager of their own who is

instructed to send the thing to smash, and then the man putting his money into it is told that the seam is not workable. Supposing Irishmen put their heads together and start a coal mine of their own. What happens? Do you know that we in Ireland cannot make a single yard of railroad without the permission of the British House of Commons and the British House of Lords? There is not a single coal mine in Ireland that has a line of railway to its pit head, and no coal can be mined economically unless there is a railway.

A friend of mine owns one of the most important coal mines in Ireland. During the war he asked for liberty to make four miles of line to develop this mine and add to the coal supplies necessary in the war. He was refused the liberty to make these four miles of railroad and the coal from that pit has to be carried the four miles by horse and cart.

Then you have, a historical incident admitted by all historians, the killing of the great Woollen Industry in Ireland. We had one of the greatest industries in the world, but by one stroke of the pen England deliberately killed that industry and in one week ninety thousand people were thrown out of employment, and it is this that has created the disgrace of Britain, the Dublin Slums.

We have a considerable flax-growing industry in Ulster. At the beginning of the war the Government appealed to Ireland to increase the acreage under flax. The people responded and the acreage was increased three or four hundred per cent. The Government then took over the product at a fixed price and the people were agreeable. When the war was over the question arose: Would this control of the flax continue. The Government decided to continue to fix the price, but they fixed it at twenty to twenty-five per cent. less than the previous year, although the price of flax had risen and it was scarcely profitable to grow flax. The season had no sooner commenced than it was discovered that instead of decreasing in the market flax had increased from fifty to one hundred per cent. The farmers appealed to the Government to rectify this injustice, but they refused to move an inch, with the result that to-day the Irish farmer is compelled to sell his flax to the British Government at fifty to one hundred per cent. less than the Scotch farmers or the Belgian farmers, and that has done more to make the black Presbyterians of the North of Ireland think than anything else the Government has done.

A short time before I left home a farmer brought two loads of flax into the market in a purely Protestant district. The Government officials marked the price at so much, but the farmer said it was too little and explained that it was worth more. The official said "I will give you no more." The farmer said: "Then I will take it home again." The official refused to let him take the flax away and five policemen jumped on to the cart. However, four or five hundred people had gathered around and they came forward and pitched the policemen to

one side and drew the cart away themselves. Then they came back and found that the Government officials had taken the other load and locked it up, but they broke open the place where it was stored and took that away also.

I could go on giving illustrations like these for an hour to show that in Industry we have good reason to be dissatisfied.

Take transport. Do you know what made the United States so great and prosperous? Do you know what has made your great Dominion? It was your splendid railways that enable you to take your produce thousands of miles at economic rates. In Ireland our railways were always in the hands of the British financiers and to-day they are entirely controlled by the British Government, and I think they are the worst in the world. It used to be a standing joke in Londonderry that if we wished to send a bag of potatoes to Cork we could send it cheaper through New York and back. The people in Dublin could get their goods cheaper from the West of Ireland through Liverpool, even during the war when every bit of tonnage was absolutely necessary and when it was so dangerous to send anything by sea, thousands and thousands of tons were shipped from Dublin to Liverpool and back to Belfast.

An example to show the handicap we are under and why Ireland is depopulated: Before the war the cost of taking a ton of goods from the West Coast of Ireland to London was \$19.00; the cost of bringing a ton of goods from France to the same market was only \$2.00.

Could any country prosper under such circumstances as these?

If you will pardon a personal reference; I grow considerable produce myself; I live only fifteen miles from Belfast. It costs me more to send potatoes, oats or hay by rail these fifteen miles than it costs you to bring your grain from Fort William to Montreal, over a thousand miles. That is what our common-sense, practical, sincere business men are face to face with.

Take our great ports. We have twenty-six harbors, eighteen of them first-class, the finest in the world, only three or four days away from your shores. There is not a single sail on these harbors to-day. I was at Galway only a few months before I left home and there I saw a harbor capable of holding the British, American and Canadian Fleets at rest with not a single sail in it. At one time Galway was second only to the port of London. At the time of the Union we had thirty percent of the tonnage of Britain; to-day, only two percent. No man could be content with that state of affairs in Ireland to-day unless he was dead. Thank God Ireland is not dead to-day.

Take another test. What makes any country prosperous or great? Is it not its population? And what have we been witness to in Ireland for over a century, decade after decade, we see the population decaying from over eight millions to a little over four million. The cry I hear everywhere now in this great Dominion is "Give us more immigrants; give us more people."

No part of Ireland has suffered more from emigration than has rural Ulster. My own parish has decreased in population over twenty per cent. in the last fifteen years. There are six hundred or a thousand acres of land not a mile from me on which once beautiful farms were found, but to-day there is but a single cottage on that land, and it is the richest and best kind of land. No part has suffered more than rural Ulster in this respect and to-day Ulster is suffering more from depopulation than probably any other part of Ireland.

These are some of the things that make us dissatisfied, we know that these are facts. There are men now who turn their eyes to Heaven and say that it is all a religious question. Either they don't know what they are talking about or they are downright hypocrites.

I find some good people here, who seem to be perfectly sincere, who have got the idea into their heads that in Ireland we are two warring camps, Catholic and Protestant, armed to the teeth, ready to cut each other's throats if it were not for the kindly British soldiers. That is as far as it could possibly be from the truth. I want to say more: if every single British soldier was removed from Ireland to-morrow there would not be a single drop of blood shed. I want to say further: that it is the presence of these British soldiers that are the cause of all the crime and outrage to-day.

I am glad in this to find myself in accord with Lord Hugh Cecil—no one will question the loyalty of Lord Hugh Cecil. In a letter to the London Times the other day—not out of any love for Ireland but from the standpoint of the common-sense British statesman who see it is to the interest and well being of his country—he suggested that the British Army be withdrawn and that Ireland, through a National Assembly, should have the right to choose her own form of Government. I might say that Ireland HAS, through her National Assembly, chosen her own form of Government.

Further, in regard to this religious question. I have sat on committees for over fifteen years with Roman Catholics and Protestant Orangemen of all denominations, dealing with questions affecting all creeds and classes, and never once in all these years did the question of religion crop up to give us any trouble whatever.

Or, if you look at it from another point of view: The Presbyterian Church have in the south and west of Ireland a hundred or more congregations scattered amongst enormously Catholic populations, and never in our experience have these people or their ministers suffered any annoyance, intolerance or interference in their work there from Roman Catholics fellow-countrymen. I knew this perfectly well but I wanted to make sure that I was right and I wrote to four of our Ministers, one in the extreme South, one in the West, one in the Midlands and one in Dublin. I asked them each two questions: 1st, Have you or your people ever experienced any trouble, annoyance, intolerance or interference from your Roman Catholic fellow-citizens?; 2nd, Do your people fear or anticipate

any form of persecution or annoyance in any form under Irish self-government in the future? The answer was in all four cases: "We have never experienced any annoyance, intolerance or interference—rather the reverse, we have experienced the very greatest kindness and courtesy, and often we have had help, financial and otherwise. Neither do we anticipate any annoyance, interference or intolerance from Irish self-government.

I just want to give an illustration of the relations between Catholics and Protestants there. A friend of mine, a minister, was motor-cycling on the road and he ran into a motor truck. He was injured and was carried into a neighboring farmhouse and a Specialist was called from Dublin to attend him. The specialist said it would be dangerous, perhaps fatal to have him removed from that farmhouse. The good lady turned her drawingroom into a bedroom and got two nurses to attend him. He had to have nourishing food and the lady killed off all her own chickens and then bought more from the neighbors, and at the end of six weeks that woman refused to take a single penny for all this. That was a Roman Catholic house and that was a Presbyterian minister.

That is how we are cutting each other's throats in Ireland, for the love of God. That would happen anywhere in Ireland to-day under similar circumstances.

Look at it from still another angle. It is an acknowledged fact that the Liberal Party of England, Scotland and Wales, made up largely of the non-Conformists of England; these people have been for years in favor of some form of self-government for Ireland. The same is true of the Church of Wales and the United Free Church of Scotland. On the other hand the leading Roman Catholic families of England, men like Norfolk, Lord Edmund Talbot, have always been bitterly opposed to any form of Irish freedom.

As a matter of fact our divisions in Ireland are like the divisions in any civilized country in the world: political and economic, and not religious. It would be just as true to say of the division between the two great parties in England—that that division was religious, because practically the members of one church belong to one party and members of another belong to the other party; but it is never said it was a religious difference, for the simple reason that it did not suit the politicians to say so. It suits the politicians to say that the Irish question is a religious question, but that game is pretty well played out.

To give another illustration: Mr. Barton, a protestant farmer from Wicklow held a command in the British Army and fought in the British Army and helped to put down the Easter uprising. Later he came in contact with the Sinn Feiners and it resulted in his joining their ranks and he was elected Sinn Fein Member of Parliament. Because he said that if Fleming, one of the prisoners, died, he would lay his death to the charge of Lord French and Mr. Macpherson: for saying that, he was seized and sentenced to ten years imprisonment, which sentence was

later reduced to three years. That was an Irish Protestant. On the other hand, the Prosecuting Attorney General was a Roman Catholic. You have Protestants and Presbyterians Sinn Fein Members, and you have Catholic Unionists Members of Parliament.

To look at the matter from another aspect: What has the British Government done during the past four hundred years to make Ireland Protestant? Has it not done everything to make it more determinedly Roman Catholic than ever? I can understand the man who says he wants to maintain the Union between Great Britain and Ireland because it is best for Ireland. That is intelligible. But the man who says he wants to maintain the Union because he wants to advance the cause of Protestantism is either a fool or a knave, or probably both.

A gentleman in New York the other day said to me: "You say it is not a religious question?" I said, "I say it most emphatically." "Then tell me" he said "does the average man in the North of Ireland oppose Irish freedom because he loves his British citizenship or because he fears some form or other of interference with his religion?" I said, "The motives of most men are mixed, but I believe the ordinary man in the street is much more concerned about his religion than about his British citizenship." "Then why" said he, "is it not a religious question?" "The answer is simple" I said, "your little child will perhaps not want to go upstairs alone because some foolish servant has told him there is a bogeyman there. There is no use in your telling him there is no bogeyman there because he won't believe you. If you are sensible you will take him up yourself and show him there is nothing there, then by and by he will go up himself." That is the whole religious question in Ireland in a nutshell.

Another reason to show you the absurdity of this religious myth. We have a County Council system in operation. In twenty-six Counties the population is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and these Councils have very considerable powers of taxation, and never in all these twenty years was there a single instance where the members of those Councils used their powers unjustly against their Protestant fellow-countrymen. As a matter of fact, there are far more Protestants in positions of emolument in these purely Roman Catholic districts than their numbers would warrant, which shows that the Irish Catholic, so far from being intolerant or persecuting, he is more tolerant than perhaps he ought to be.

Or, if this was a religious question where the Protestants in the North of Ireland feared Roman Catholic interference or intolerance, was it not criminal and cowardly for them to desert their Protestant brothers in these twenty-six counties and leave them to the tender mercies of the Roman Catholics? If you only reflect for a moment it shows you that all this talk of Catholic and Protestant is downright insincerity.

There is another argument made: that we are not worthy of our freedom because we did not do our fair part in the war, because we are pro-German, in fact.

Look at things calmly and fairly for a minute. What are the facts? What are the figures as given—not by Irishmen, but given by the Secretary of War in the British House of Commons, when he said that two hundred and fifty thousand Irishmen—to be accurate, two hundred and forty nine thousand odd—were fighting in the British Army during the war. One hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand of those were Irish Roman Catholics. These men, believing that the Allies were fighting for liberty, for freedom of small nations—including their own—forgetting their past, forgetting their wrongs; forgetting that Irish men, women and children were shot down in Dublin three days before the war; they joined the British Army and fought as Irishmen can fight, and I never heard that one of these men proved to be a coward or a traitor on the field of battle.

Think what two hundred and fifty thousand men means. We are only a small people of four and a half millions or less. This means one-eighteenth of our population; one-eighteenth of your population would be about half a million; and I understand that is what you sent across the water, and who would dare say that Canada did not do her fair share in the war.

Take the men who refused to join. They said to England "You are fighting for the freedom of small nations; you ask us to fight; you say you are in need of men; you have two hundred and fifty thousand English soldiers in Ireland defending it against the Germans. We don't say that one Irishman is better than one Englishman, but we do say that one Irishman is as good as one Englishman any day. Take these two hundred and fifty thousand British soldiers out of Ireland and send them to France or Flanders and we will replace them by two hundred and fifty thousand Irishmen, and we swear before you and before the Allies and before High Heaven that no German or man of any nation will ever set his foot on Irish soil except over the dead bodies of those two hundred and fifty thousand Irishmen.

Did England respond to that request, to that test? No. Then these men said "When England does not respond she is not sincere; there is one small nation she can free without shedding a drop of blood, and that small nation is Ireland, and if she refuses, the only nation we know and want to fight for is Ireland."

They say these men were pro-Germans. As a matter of fact, they were pro-Ireland. Those thirteen hundred young men fought and died for Ireland and they knew they were not dying in vain because the Irish cause is now a world question; they cared not whether they died in Ireland or in France. No, Irishmen have no need to be ashamed of themselves; they believed they were fighting for the same principles as you were fighting for; for the same cause: for the liberty and freedom of their own small nation that they have been fighting for for seven hundred and fifty years.

Some would say "What about the Ulster question?" Ah! there's the rub. It seems to be a great problem now to know just where Ulster

is. When I was in school I learned that there were four provinces in Ireland: Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connaught. I also learned that Ulster had nine counties. The other day I saw in the papers that it only had six; perhaps to-morrow it will only have four, and next week it may have none at all. As a matter of fact there is no homogeneous part of Ireland that you can call Ulster. Those six counties that they have cut off, every one of them has another Ulster of its own. Belfast has Sinn Fein constituencies, and Londonderry has the Sinn Fein flag flying over it. Down has a South Down. You cannot cut off any part and say it is homogeneous. You might cut off twenty-six counties and say they are homogeneous because they are perfectly in favor of self-determination, but you cannot cut off any part and say it is homogeneous against it. Ulster is intertwined with the whole of Ireland, and I stand here as an Ulster man, a living symbol of the union of the North and South of Ireland—a union, not made by charters, but a union made by God. Ulster is inextricably bound up with the rest of Ireland and it is criminal and absurd for any man to try and vivisect Ireland in this way.

The claim of Ireland is perfectly simple, logical and clear—so clear that people cannot see it. Ireland, by eighty per cent of her people, in a regular voting, eighty per cent. of her people decided that she will have a Government and form a Republic of her own. But there is a minority; you always have one in every country in the world. That minority believe that as patriotic Irishmen it is best for Ireland to remain part of Great Britain, but in any civilized country of the world the minority falls in with the majority, and I am certain that if we were left alone, without outside interference, Irishmen of the North and South could settle their own problems in twenty minutes.

What are the Sinn Fein? Do they wear horns, or what are they like? I have sat on the University Benches, and young men of higher ideals or nobler aspirations I never wish to meet. These young men have said "We are tired looking to parliamentary parties, Liberal and Tory; we are tired looking to the rest of the world—we will look to ourselves." Sinn Fein simply means "Self Reliance." That is a principle that should appeal to this liberty-loving, self-reliant young Dominion. It is a principle that should appeal to all common-sense men throughout the world. I say that this movement in Ireland is a movement of Youth. It is not a party question; it is not a religious question. In sense there is a question between Catholic and Protestant, but I would not cross the street to speak of it.

I believe there is, deep down, a great religious question: I believe it is wrong for any nation to hold another nation in bondage; it is bad for both in the long run; it taps the moral life of both. These young men (Sinn Fein) have seen this; they have looked over the barriers of political parties and creeds and they have banded themselves together with high ideals and noble aspirations, with the inspiration of the past, with the glorious history of the past of Ireland when she sent out her scholars and

missionaries to all parts of the world, and when they look to the future they know that she has a great amount of spiritual riches and wealth, and to those high and noble ideals they have dedicated themselves; for those ideals they are prepared to live, and for those ideals they are prepared to die.

Someone has said that Ireland has been born again in the last ten years; she has found her soul, and it is that young soul that is crying to the world to-day for help and recognition while it is being crushed by aeroplanes, bombing planes, artillery and machine guns, but you cannot crush the soul of any people. The soul of man is all that is great in man, and the soul of a nation is all that is great in a nation, and it is the soul of Ireland that is crying to you and to the world to-day for liberty and freedom. Edward Blake, one of the greatest of Irishmen, said "There is no use giving any boon to a nation except the boon they ask for." What is the boon the Irish have been asking for centuries; asking from the scaffold, asking from the battlefield, asking from the prisons, asking through the blood and tears? It is the boon of governing themselves. Ireland is asking nothing unreasonable. She is asking for no property from any part of the rest of the world; she is asking for nothing but her own, and I want to say that given her freedom, Ireland, I believe heartily and sincerely, would be the greatest source of strength to Britain that could possibly be had in any part of the world.

I say that, for this reason: One of the reasons Britain gives for holding Ireland is the fear that she would be used as a base of attack on herself. Does it not stand to common-sense that Ireland in bondage is a source of possible disaster to Great Britain; that in bondage she would welcome any liberator, no matter where he came from? But Ireland free; not from any sentimental reasons of gratitude, but from purely selfish motives, Ireland free would feel it to her interest to help England and defend England against any foe, no matter where from, because she knows that if England were conquered her turn would be next. Did not England defend France because she knew that if Germany conquered France, her own turn would be next. Irishmen are not fools; they know where their interests lie, and I am certain that with a free Ireland, instead of a running sore as it is to-day, she would be a source of strength and glory to Britain.

Give Ireland her freedom and I am certain that Irishmen are willing to give any pledge in reason that they will not allow themselves to be used as a base of attack on England, and I am perfectly certain that if Irishmen pledge their word they will never break it. Ireland has never broken its pledged word, much less its oath. It is in England's own interest that she should do this; if she has common-sense, even out of her selfishness she must do it. Surely she will be great enough to allow Ireland to work out her own destiny and play her part and do her fair share among free peoples. It is for that purpose that Irishmen ask your sympathetic recognition and help to-day.

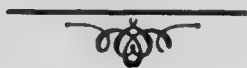
Idle Thoughts

ON

Ireland

BY

JEROME K. JEROME



The plan for the solution of the Irish problem most favored by the English upper classes till within a short time ago was the towing of Ireland into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and there sinking her. In my younger days I was under the impression that the suggestion was intended as a joke, amusing at first, but growing tiresome by earnest and unwearied repetition as the years rolled on. Closer acquaintance with the political mentality of the English upper classes leaves me in doubt as to whether the idea may not have occurred to them as a serious alternative to the granting of Home Rule. One reflects that the English upper classes are not guilty of much wit and humor, and drastic measures for the removal of the Irish difficulty have always appealed to their imagination. Possibly the spread of education may account for this particular scheme having fallen into disrepute. It is put forward nowadays by only very old gentlemen who generally clinch the argument by fiercely waving their umbrellas. The more intelligent of the Unionist Party appear to have convinced themselves of its impracticability. The later and much more sensible plan now advocated is that all Irish irreconcilables, together with their wives and families (In politics, an 'irreconcilable' person is a man who will not reconcile himself to our idea of what is good for him) should be 'removed' from Ireland and their places be supplied by English settlers. Oliver Cromwell

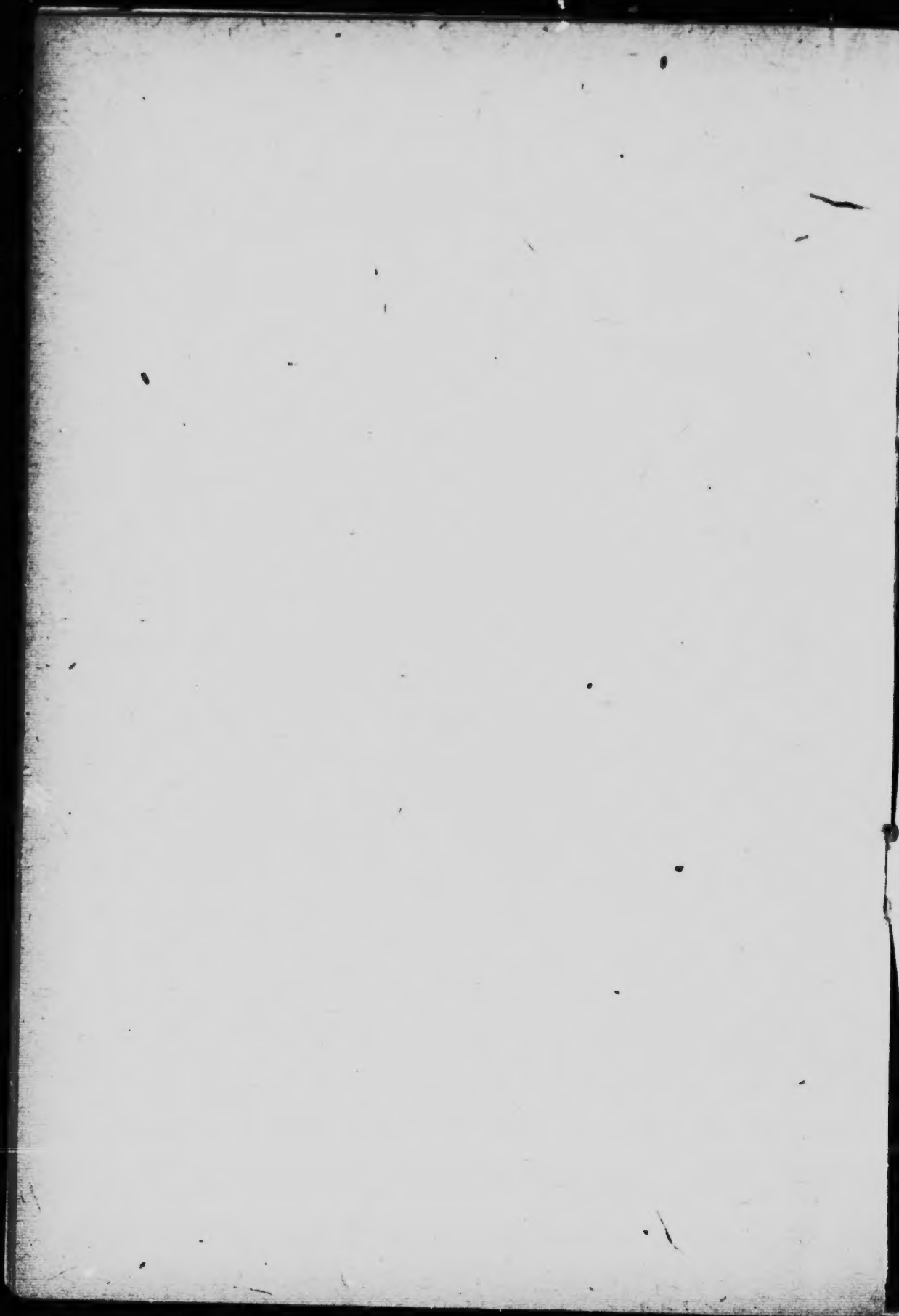
tried this method under conditions much more favorable to success; though I doubt if to-day we are thanking him for his contribution to the Irish problem. But the idea is gaining favor with the English Military Party and cannot be dismissed as altogether unimportant. Its possibilities are being discussed in our clubs and drawing-rooms, and already there is an echo in the Press revealing the underground currents of savagery that are everywhere threatening European civilization. The Press can be eloquent enough preaching the sacredness of constitutional methods to Labor. But where the interests of the classes are concerned it never hesitates to advocate recourse to Direct Action. The late Lord Salisbury's plan for twenty years of resolute government works alright provided the nation to be governed were not equally resolute never to submit. For three hundred years all the resources of the British Empire have been strained to the subjection of Ireland. And to-day this little nation of four million souls is in more defiant mood than ever, declaring that there is only one thing that will content her—the independence of Ireland.

Why should it frighten us? Why is England the only country that dare not live side by side with a free people? If the French were a little people, I suppose we should be arguing the same way, declaring that we must conquer France and hold her down, because she happens to be only twenty miles from Dover. We should recall her past history, all her acts of aggression against us, all her threatenings, her unfriendly allusion to 'perfidious Albion,' the centuries of misunderstanding and mutual dislike. Can we allow a country as near to us as France to assert her independence? So it would be urged. What a jumpingoff ground for our enemies! Why, her guns from Calais could rake our coasts. Our merchantmen could no longer ride the English Channel in security. Sorry. Any little thing we can do to make the French people happy and contented we will out of our generosity consider. Frenchmen shall be represented even to the excess of their due in our Parliament at Westminster. We will even allow them to organize societies for the preservation of the French language. The English Castle in Paris shall rule them justly, as is our good English way. French peasants shall be paid high wages for serving in the (English) Royal French Constabulary and shall help England to maintain order over Frenchmen. But that France should be allowed her own Government, her own Parliament, to rule herself! The thing is unthinkable. Home Rule, as regards

tramways and electric lighting, perhaps we will permit her. She shall have her National County Council in Paris. Any little thing like that, with pleasure. So long as France remains within the British Empire, so long as she submits to a British Army of Occupation and the control of an English viceroy. France is as near to us as is Ireland. France really could be a danger to us. One cannot forget that there have been times when she has been. Every argument used to justify British rule in Ireland could be used with tenfold force to justify our conquering and holding France. Except this one fact: That we can't do it. France is not a little nation, helpless to resist us

If America argued as we do, she would conquer and annex Canada, as she easily could do. America dare not allow a British possession from which an enemy's troops could be poured across her border, in whose ports an enemy's navy could shelter in safety, to exist beside her. What should we say, if Spain, using our arguments, were to conquer and annex our ancient ally, Portugal? Suppose Soviet Russia declared that she could not sleep in her bed while there existed on her borders an independent Finland and Poland, aggressive, quarrelsome, always waiting their opportunity to attack her. Can one not imagine the howl of virtuous indignation that would go up from our Imperial Press against Russia, the bully of the smaller nations merely because they happen to be her neighbors?

Why do we foam at the mouth because of the mere suggestion that a little free and independent nation should rise out of the Atlantic Ocean some twenty to fifty miles from our shores? Sooner or later it will have to come to that. The sooner the British public faces the fact and gains control over its nerves, the better for Great Britain. Other nations than the Irish, left to themselves, have overcome difficulties greater than the Ulster problem. Ulster could take care of herself as well within the Irish Parliament as outside it. In every country outside Ireland and the Irish have proved themselves practical politicians, capable of government. It is an agricultural country. And agricultural countries are conservative by instinct. There is no sense in half-measures. They invariably produce the maximum of evil to the minimum of good. Let Ireland go, with God's blessing and a shake of the hand. And the hate and evil of a thousand years will be drowned. And out of the sea will arise a friendly nation that we can live with side by side.



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